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UNCLAS KUWAIT 004961

SIPDIS

ACTION FOR IIP/G/NEA-SA TERRY SCOTT

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KANESHIRO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KU](#) [KMPI](#) [OIIP](#)

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR US SPECIALIST ON POLITICAL ACTION
CAMPAIGNS FOR WOMEN'S ISSUES

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED--PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY

1. Summary: Post requests a US speaker/specialist to provide training recommendations for a Kuwaiti NGO focusing on women's political activism for the period December 6-10, 2003, or for anytime in January if the December timeframe is not possible. The speaker/specialist recruited should be experienced in the planning and execution of successful political action strategies relating to women's issues, and be capable of assessing what training, resource and organizational requirements a nascent women's NGO would require to achieve a specific political goal. Recommendations from this program will serve as a basis for a more in-depth program in Kuwait for this NGO, perhaps in the context of MEPI. End Summary.

2. (SBU) Under the leadership of Rola Dashti, a Kuwaiti women's political rights advocate who was a participant in ECA's Vital Voices program and other USG exchanges, a group of women representing a cross section of Kuwaiti society are planning to challenge the country's "social allowance law," which mandates that the monthly governmental allowance for each child in a family be accorded to the father, even if he does not have custody of the children. According to Dr. Dashti, the inequity of the law (and the fact that the children for whose welfare it is intended often do not have the benefit of the stipend) is a source of resentment among Kuwaiti women that cuts across lines of class, education, and religious orientation. Dr. Dashti and her colleagues believe that convincing Kuwaiti authorities to change the law (so that whoever has custody of the children receives the funds) would represent an important turning point in raising political consciousness among women in Kuwait, and has asked PAS assistance in bringing American experts to teach her nascent organization how to mount an effective advocacy campaign in this regard.

3. Before post commits funds for what will likely be a series of complicated and expensive advocacy skills training seminars, we think that an initial assessment of the needs of this group by an expert in women's advocacy and political action campaigns would make sense. The recommendations by this expert would then serve as a basis for future action, perhaps in the context of MEPI. The program itself would involve a series of meetings and strategy sessions with the NGO and with selected Kuwaitis who support the group's goals. The specialist would also be consulted by PAO and other mission officers.

4. Program dates: December 6-10, 2003. Recommend arrival in country December 4; departure December 11 or 12. Alternatively, anytime in January would be acceptable. The weekend in Kuwait is Thursday-Friday--no programming is possible on these two days.

5. Funding: I-Bucks.

6. Language preferred: English. (Note: NGO has told us that they want a speaker/specialist from a US-based NGO for this project, and have specifically ruled out inviting someone from a regional Arab-world organization.)

7. SBU: Type of Specialist requested: Experienced women's rights activist/political action campaign expert who can assess the needs of a nascent women's NGO in Kuwait that seeks to modify an administrative law that discriminates against women and children. Specialist would be expected to issue a report/analysis outlining recommended next steps in terms of advocacy training (e.g., use of media in political action campaigns, organization building, defining an agenda, answering criticism, etc) that the NGO might need to successfully wage its campaign. Post suggests IIP contact the following individuals for possible leads on such a specialist: State Department NEA/PI director Alina Romanowski (tel: 202-647-1519; email: RomanowskiAL@state.gov; May Taylor Doherty, NDI, (202-728-5699, email MTDoherty@NDI.org)

8. Justification: Support for political empowerment of

women and advocacy for children's welfare are key mission and MEPI goals. Post believes that this program could lead to a broader action plan on these key issues.

19. Program Officer is PAO John Moran, (tel: (965) 539-0373, e-mail MoranJG@state.gov) Thanks and regards.

JONES